

97-84161-3

Goell, Milton Jacob

Brownsville must have  
public housing

Brooklyn, N.Y.

1940

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Box 540 Goell, Milton Jacob, 1904-

Brownsville must have public housing; housing, health, crime, economic and other social facts and figures arguing for rehabilitation of this Brooklyn slum area, by Milton J. Goell ... Brooklyn, N. Y., Brooklyn committee for better housing, and Brownsville neighborhood council, 1940.

2 p. l., 7-30 p. 22".

Another copy in Avery. 1940.

- i. Housing—Brooklyn. ii. Brownsville neighborhood council, Brooklyn. iii. Title.  
i. Brooklyn committee for better housing.

Library of Congress

HD7804.B8G6

40-35378

[2]

331.8330974723

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## TECHNICAL MICROFORM DATA

FILM SIZE: 35 mmREDUCTION RATIO: 12:1IMAGE PLACEMENT: IA (IIA) IB IIBDATE FILMED: 8/12/97INITIALS: TLHTRACKING #: 23659

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BROWNSVILLE  
*Must Have*  
PUBLIC HOUSING

HOUSING, HEALTH, CRIME, ECONOMIC AND  
OTHER SOCIAL FACTS AND FIGURES  
ARGUING FOR REHABILITATION OF  
THIS BROOKLYN SLUM AREA

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Brownsville Neighborhood Council

# BROWNSVILLE *Must Have* PUBLIC HOUSING

HOUSING, HEALTH, CRIME, ECONOMIC AND  
OTHER SOCIAL FACTS AND FIGURES  
ARGUING FOR REHABILITATION OF  
THIS BROOKLYN SLUM AREA

By MILTON J. GOELL

*Member of the New York Bar, Chairman of the Brownsville and East New  
York Committee of the Brooklyn Committee for Better Housing,  
and Chairman of the Housing Committee of the  
Brownsville Neighborhood Council.*

*Published By*

BROOKLYN COMMITTEE FOR BETTER HOUSING  
157 Montague Street — Brooklyn, New York

*and*

BROWNSVILLE NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL  
564 Hopkinson Avenue — Brooklyn, New York

1940

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## FOREWORD

The Brooklyn Committee for Better Housing believes that the next housing project should be erected in Brownsville.

Housing projects in the Williamsburg, Red Hook, Navy Yard, and Bedford-Stuyvesant sections have already been achieved. It is our conviction that the public housing authorities must turn to Brownsville for their next activity in behalf of slum clearance and better housing.

Our aim has been to bring committees of various sections together as a Borough-wide committee, get them to work not in competition with each other, but in co-operation. Brownsville has been cooperative and has supported the other sections in securing their projects, and now deserves the assistance of all.

The needs of the Brownsville section have been convincingly and amply set forth in this pamphlet by Milton J. Goell, Chairman of our Committee for Brownsville and East New York, and Chairman of the Housing Committee of the Brownsville Neighborhood Council; and the Brooklyn Committee earnestly asks its reading on the part of all who seek a better Brooklyn.

JOHN HOWARD MELISH  
*Chairman, Brooklyn Committee  
for Better Housing*

*The Rectory  
Church of The Holy Trinity  
126 Pierrepont Street  
Brooklyn, New York  
May 10, 1940*

## INTRODUCTION

The Brownsville Neighborhood Council is composed of twenty local agencies and a number of civic-minded residents in the section who are interested in the improvement of conditions in this congested area of Brooklyn. From its very beginning, the Council has made every effort to bring about a recognition, by the community and by the responsible civic authorities, of the imperative need of a low rent housing project in Brownsville.

We fully realize that substandard housing is only a part of the problem of our slum districts. Unemployment, lack of medical and recreational facilities, juvenile delinquency, are only a few of the elements which add to slum conditions in any community. At the same time, we feel that the eradication of a substantial blighted area in our neighborhood, and the building of a housing unit, will provide decent sanitary housing for many of our residents. It will also bring with it many facilities and improvements in health, recreational, and social adjustments which must react favorably on the entire section.

In the past, our Housing Committee has arranged housing exhibits, lectures, discussions, and mass meetings, and has been in contact with various housing authorities and public officials to effect a better housing program for our community. At this time we have thought it necessary to publish this study by our capable and energetic housing chairman, Milton J. Goell. It is our hope that the needs set forth so eloquently in this

pamphlet will arouse the interest and active cooperation of all those who are working to bring about a fuller life for the people of our city through healthful and better homes.

ALTER F. LANDESMAN  
*President, Brownsville Neighborhood Council*

*Rabbi's Study  
Hebrew Educational Society  
564 Hopkinson Avenue  
Brooklyn, N. Y.  
May 10, 1940*

BROWNSVILLE  
*Must Have*  
PUBLIC HOUSING

THE housing situation in the Brownsville area of Brooklyn must have the immediate attention of the federal, state, and local authorities. It has long been common knowledge among social and health workers that this section has been spawning anti-social elements entirely out of proportion to its population. The history of the community, its economic and social complexity, and its deplorable housing facilities, have all made for a concentration of anti-social factors which our society must now obliterate without hesitancy or delay, in self-defense, and for the physical, moral, and economic health of our city.

Professor James Ford of Harvard has defined a slum as "a residential area in which the housing is so deteriorated, so sub-standard, or so unwholesome as to be a menace to the health, safety, morality, or welfare of the occupants." The definition fits Brownsville, which abounds in shacks and hovels which were flimsy, ill-designed, and badly equipped to start with, and have grown tenfold worse with age, neglect, and poor management. These so-called homes lack adequate light, air, sunshine, space, water, heat, and safety, hygienic, and sanitary facilities. In these dirty, bad-smelling, germ-ridden structures, abutting upon crowded, ugly, barren streets, live about one hundred thousand members of



our community. We claim that such housing conditions constitute a menace to the health, safety, morals, and welfare of the occupants, and to our entire social structure.

The city, through its Planning Commission, has recently taken official cognizance of this state of affairs in Brownsville. Under our law, housing projects may now be erected solely in locations approved by the City Planning Commission. In accordance with the law, the City Planning Commission has designated certain blighted areas in New York City as zones where public housing projects may be erected. In Brownsville, the Commission has definitely selected the area bounded by Liberty Avenue, Sackman Street, Livonia Avenue, Rockaway Avenue, Sutter Avenue, Bristol Street, and East New York Avenue, as "the Brownsville housing zone."

#### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

BROWNSVILLE begins its history as an urban settlement back in the lush days of metropolitan expansion. About 1880, the distant and crowded East Side of New York, with its tall tenements and narrow cobbled streets, without sunlight and without greenery, became irksome to the immigrants who were dumped into it from the towns and villages of eastern and central Europe. People who wanted to live in the country came to Brownsville — to the green open spaces — for fresh air and fresh milk. First they arrived in the summer months only; later they stayed on for the entire year, just as people today are settling in the suburban and rural areas around New York. Like the suburbanites of today, these people

had to travel to the city to get to their jobs, — to their shops, factories, and other places of employment.

While travelling even today takes time and energy, and is the price of quiet living, in that day it was still worse. For instance, those in the heart of Brownsville at one time took the Rockaway Avenue trolley across Brooklyn, and then changed to the ferry to Manhattan, — a speedy trip of about two hours each way. After a time, the workers grew tired of this Odyssey, and some of them succeeded in inducing their employers to move their factories to Brownsville. The inducement was that the manufacturer could have a country home in the front of his plot of land, and factory in the rear of it.

Some of the local farmers began to see possibilities in dividing their farms into lots, and selling them to these nature-lovers. They engaged gentlemen with connections on the East Side as their brokers to induce their friends to buy lots in the beautiful country. And it worked: — the great open spaces were sliced up, the farms, if not the farmhouses, began to disappear, and Brownsville became citified. But it was a city of wood, — of frame houses, frame factories in back yards, frame privies, and small frame tenements.

In 1901 the Tenement House Act was passed regulating the construction and maintenance of buildings containing three or more dwelling units. It aimed to bring more light and air into multiple dwellings, to secure them against fire, to provide separate sanitary and hygienic facilities, to prevent overcrowding. In Brownsville, brick houses began to compete with wooden ones; but many frame one- and two-family houses were still being erected.

The multiple dwellings only satisfied the minimum requirements of the new law, and were built after the style of the East Side tenements from which the builders came. Furthermore, while the first commercial builders were carpenters, or plumbers, or other craftsmen in the building trades, they were soon followed by speculators who knew little about building.

It is easy to understand why parts of the Brownsville of today are the slum areas which we seek to eliminate. Brownsville does not suffer, as does the East Side, from over-density of population or a preponderance of old law tenements. However, while many buildings were put up after the Multiple Dwelling Law was enacted, construction originally was in large part slap-together, speculative, jerry-built. One thing can be said about the buildings on the East Side — they are durable, tenaciously so, alas — but in Brownsville the buildings have long since deteriorated, and have been held together only by the meanest kind of tinkering and fixing. The multiple dwellings are usually small — 3, 6, 8 family, and slightly larger houses — and they are generally owned by landlords of small means who crack under the burden of maintaining them.

That is Brownsville as it was in 1917, before we entered the World War, and that is how it is today, except for several areas. This type of construction — a sort of bastard rural, or bucolic East Side — made Brownsville an unbeautiful place in its balmiest days, and fixed its status as a "cheap section." With the First World War, the cost of building went up, as building standards had gone up, and builders found that the buildings they could now erect cost more to construct than Brownsville

tenants could generally afford to pay for them. So, to all intents and purposes, while the Linden Boulevard, East Flatbush, and Eastern Parkway sections developed as areas for a better tenant clientele, housing in Brownsville in large part remained static, confined to the contours of its development up to 1920. It was where Brownsville bordered on Linden Boulevard, and merged into the East Flatbush and Eastern Parkway sections, that modern buildings were constructed. Here and in other isolated spots there are yet to be found reasonably good living quarters.

Today, Brownsville has not only stopped growing; it is retrogressing, decaying, or, if I may coin a word, it is rapidly slumifying. The depression put the finishing touches to the conversion of Brownsville into a predominantly slum area. Most of the landlords of small means who generally own Brownsville properties, either abandoned their properties, were wiped out by foreclosures, or could not afford, especially with the drop in rentals, to improve or keep their properties in repair.

This, then, is Brownsville's heritage from the past sixty years; but we cannot properly show that Brownsville is to a great extent a slum merely by giving its history. We shall now turn from this brief history to some figures which demonstrate the effects of this housing history upon the moral, social, economic, and health conditions of the population which is confined to this area.

## THE BOUNDARIES

THE health center district of Brownsville is delimited by Ralph Avenue on the extreme West, Sapphire Street on the extreme East, Liberty Avenue on the North, and Jamaica Bay on the extreme South. This comprises a district which covers not only what is generally known as Brownsville, but also East New York and Canarsie. It has appeared to some of us that a more popular conception of Brownsville would place it in the following boundaries: — East New York Avenue to Liberty Avenue to Junius Street to Linden Boulevard to East 98th Street, to Howard Avenue to East New York Avenue. The housing figures in the Real Property Inventory of 1934 are given according to census tracts. The above described area approximates, and is only slightly less than the area taken in by, census tracts 894, 896, 898, 900, 902, 904, 906, 908, 910, 912, 914, 916, 918, 920. Tracts 904, 906, 908, 910, 912, 914 correspond fairly closely — they go only slightly beyond, on the east and west — to the new Brownsville housing zone. This zone, it will be recalled from the above, is the area bounded by Liberty Avenue, Sackman Street, Livonia Avenue, Rockaway Avenue, Sutter Avenue, Bristol Street, and East New York Avenue. We now give selected statistical facts from the Real Property Inventory, with total figures, both for what is practically Brownsville as a whole as we have defined it, and for what is approximately the housing zone. We shall hereafter refer to Brownsville when we speak of the entire community — and to the housing zone, or the zone, when we speak of the zone which has been selected for a public housing project.

## POPULATION AND HOUSES

IN 1930 there were 23,387 families in Brownsville, including 8,236 families in the housing zone. In 1934 the number for Brownsville had risen to 25,733, with 8,906 families living in the housing zone. There were in that year 24,205 white families, 1,511 negro families, and 17 families of other colors. Of these, 7,708 white families, 1,189 negro families, and 9 other colored families lived in the housing zone. These families represented a total population of 101,351, with 34,927 souls residing in the zone.

In 1934 these persons lived in 24,474 occupied family quarters (housing zone — 8,857 quarters). The total number of family quarters in Brownsville, occupied or vacant, was 26,818 (housing zone — 10,299 quarters). The total number of rented, as distinguished from owner-occupied, family quarters, was 22,820 for Brownsville, and 8,455 for the housing zone. The total number of vacant family quarters was 2,344 for Brownsville, and 1,442 for the housing zone. The zone had 61.87% of all the Brownsville vacancies, while, of its 10,299 family quarters, 14.00% were vacant as against 5.46% vacancies for the rest of the community.

The study of Brownsville's structures from the point of view of their ages bears out what was to be expected from its history. In 1934, only 518 structures in Brownsville, out of a total of 5,150, were less than 10 years of age, with 69 of these in the zone. There were 1,559 structures from 10 to 19 years old, 147 of these in the housing zone; 1,691 from 20 to 34 years (housing zone — 691); and 1,382 were 35 years and over (housing zone

— 1,137). These figures all refer to 1934. Today all the houses that have not burnt down, toppled over, or been torn down, are six years older, with all that the wear and tear of the years implies.

A further analysis of the 22,820 rented occupied family quarters also yields some revealing facts. Two hundred and seven dwelling units rented for under \$10, of which 139 were in the housing zone. 4,418 rented for from \$10 to \$19, with 2,644 in the housing zone. Of 19,661 rented occupied family quarters in multiple-dwelling structures, of which 6,544 were in the housing zone, 192 quarters rented at under \$3 per room, 3,122 at \$3 to \$4.99, and 2,482 at \$5 to \$5.99. Approximately 60 per cent of the cheap quarters were to be found in the housing zone.

Under whatever classification of poor housing we study Brownsville, we find that the worst houses are situated in the housing zone. Again and again it becomes clear why the City Planning Commission established the Brownsville housing zone. And the above rental figures probably reveal an even worse condition than is evident on the surface. For in 1934, 1,189 out of 8,906 families living in the housing zone were negro, and many probably overpaid for their rooms. Negroes in New York City are too often compelled to pay rentals far in excess of the housing value which they receive. The fact that out of 2,344 vacant family quarters in Brownsville, 1,442 were in the zone area, is entirely consistent with the other findings. Bad times notwithstanding, the people simply could not live in the substandard accommodations of the slum area; the residents left, the hovels remain. The miscellaneous data given for these

2,344 vacant family quarters in Brownsville further bears this out: — The housing zone contained forty-two out of a total of forty-seven vacant family quarters in so-called fourth class structures, 39 out of 54 of those renting for less than \$3 per room, 1,102 or 69.26% of those without central heating, 532 or 67% of those without hot water, 244 or 82.71% of those without tub or shower, and 136 or 94.44% of those without private indoor toilets. As a final fillip, the housing zone had 14 of the 15 quarters without electricity or gas lighting, and 19 out of 20 of the quarters without electricity or gas for cooking.

Turning to the miscellaneous data for the occupied family quarters, we find a similar situation. 43 out of 57 occupied family quarters in fourth class structures — structures practically unfit for human habitation — were in the housing zone. So also were 233 out of 364 occupied family quarters renting for less than \$3 per room, 4,519 out of 6,288 without a central heating plant, 2,071 out of 3,897 without hot water, 688 out of 926 without tub or shower, 437 out of 462 without private indoor toilets, 10 out of 10 without electricity or gas for lighting, and 44 out of 54 without electricity or gas for cooking. If we average four persons to a family, in the year 1934 over 25,000 of our Brownsville neighbors lived in improperly heated houses, over 15,500 lacked running hot water, over 3,700 people had no bathing facilities in their homes, and over 1,900 had to undergo risk and discomfort in the performance of natural functions. Many families had to suffer more than one of these inconveniences. The bulk of these underprivileged neighbors lived in the Brownsville housing zone.

For a more complete picture, I include the following tables covering the above-defined Brownsville areas, which I have compiled from the 1934 Real Property Inventory of New York City.

	Total Brownsville	Total Approx. housing zone
1. Total Number of Structures . . .	5,150	2,044
By age		
6. Less than 10 years (1934) . . .	518	69
7. 10 to 19 years (1934) . . .	1,559	147
8. 20 to 34 years (1934) . . .	1,691	691
9. 35 years and over (1934) . . .	1,382	1,137
By condition		
10. First class . . . . .	1,150	240
11. Second class . . . . .	3,512	1,455
12. Third class . . . . .	459	327
13. Fourth class . . . . .	29	22
15. Total Number of Family Quarters .	26,818	10,299
20. Total Number of Occupied Family Quarters . . . . .	24,474	8,857
26. Total Number Rented Occupied .	22,820	8,455

*Rented Occupied Family Quarters By Monthly Rental*

35. Under \$10 . . . . .	207	139
36. \$10 to \$19.99 . . . . .	4,418	2,644
37. \$20 to \$29.99 . . . . .	8,654	3,539
38. \$30 to \$49.99 . . . . .	8,633	1,871
39. \$50 to \$74.99 . . . . .	1,692	147
43. Total Number, Multi-family . .	19,661	6,544

*By rent per room (Multi-family structures only)*

44. Under \$3 . . . . .	192	98
45. \$ 3 to \$ 4.99 . . . . .	3,122	2,042
46. \$ 5 to \$ 5.99 . . . . .	2,482	1,546
47. \$ 6 to \$ 6.99 . . . . .	2,726	1,273
48. \$ 7 to \$ 9.99 . . . . .	6,917	1,290
49. \$10 to \$19.99 . . . . .	2,351	263
50. \$20 to \$34.99 . . . . .	11	3
51. \$35 and over . . . . .	1	0

	Total Brownsville	Total Approx. housing zone
52. Vacant Family Quarters % of Total Family Quarters Vacant . . . .	8.743	14.00
53. Vacant Family Quarters — Total Number of Vacant Family Quar- ters . . . . .	2,344	1,442

*By Monthly Rental*

58. Under \$10 . . . . .	35	30
59. \$10 to \$19.99 . . . . .	1,039	705
60. \$20 to \$29.99 . . . . .	890	564
61. \$30 to \$49.99 . . . . .	334	130
62. \$50 to \$74.99 . . . . .	25	3
78. Total Population — 1934 . . .	101,351	34,927
81. Total Number of Families—1930— United States Census . . . . .	23,387	8,236
82. Total Number of Families — 1934	25,733	8,906

*By Race of Head of Family*

83. White . . . . .	24,205	7,708
84. Negro . . . . .	1,511	1,189
85. Other colored . . . . .	17	9

MISCELLANEOUS DATA

*Number of Occupied Family Quarters*

100. With mechanical refrigeration . .	580	126
101. In Fourth Class structures . . .	57	43
102. Renting for less than \$3 per room .	364	233
103. Without central heating plant . .	6,288	4,519
104. Without hot water . . . . .	3,897	2,071
105. Without tub or shower . . . . .	926	688
106. Without electricity or gas lighting .	10	10
107. Without electricity or gas cooking .	54	44
108. Without private indoor toilets . .	462	437

*Number of Persons per room*

109. 1.00 and under . . . . .	16,457	6,049
110. 1.01 to 2 . . . . .	7,889	2,740
111. 2.01 and over . . . . .	128	68

	Total Brownsville	Total Approx. housing zone
<i>Number of Vacant Family Quarters</i>		
116. With mechanical refrigeration . . .	32	26
117. In fourth class structures . . . .	47	42
118. Renting for less than \$3 per room . .	54	39
119. Without central heating plant . . .	1,591	1,102
120. Without hot water . . . . .	794	532
121. Without tub or shower . . . . .	295	244
122. Without electricity or gas lighting . .	15	14
123. Without electricity or gas cooking . .	20	19
124. Without private indoor toilets . . .	144	136

The Real Property Inventory of 1934 was the first city-wide analysis made of housing conditions in New York City. It was a monumental project of research, and has been of inestimable value to the city in laying out its public housing program. But there is much additional information which we still need if we are to attack the city's housing problem with an intelligent plan. Fortunately, the 1940 national census enumerators will collect considerable valuable housing information on their big buff-colored sheets headed with the words, "Sixteenth Census of the United States: 1940 Housing Schedule." American housing will be studied from the answers which the American people will give to the thirty-one questions listed on the Housing Schedule; and by the time the work is done, the life history of every single dwelling unit in the country will be known.

The figures above reveal a further very significant circumstance. They show that there were in Brownsville, in 1934, a total of 1,511 negro families, and that of

this number 1,189 lived in what we have defined as the approximate housing zone. Of the 25,854 white families, 7,708 lived in that housing zone. Thus, while of the white families a little more than one out of three resided in the housing zone area, among the negro families approximately twelve out of fifteen lived there. This is a shocking state of affairs.

It is true that the extreme poverty of the negro families forces them to seek shelter in the most outmoded and cheapest houses. The same thing, too, might be said for the white families who reside there. The hard fact remains that, in general, neither the white people nor the negroes dwelling in the housing zone can afford to pay for adequate private housing. Private enterprise cannot provide housing for these people at the rentals which they can afford to pay. It has come to be accepted by all socially minded Americans that it is the duty of our democratic society to help provide housing for those in the lowest income brackets. We cannot do less if we are serious about carrying out the social ideals of our democracy.

A magnificent study of housing conditions in a negro district of the Bedford-Stuyvesant area was made by Albert L. Clarke. I think that this study was largely instrumental in helping that community to obtain the Kingsborough housing project. I hope that the study will soon be published in order that all those who are interested in slum clearance and better housing may read and profit by it. The needs of the negro families are admittedly the greatest, because they now occupy the worst slum houses in excessively disproportionate numbers to their total population.

## HEALTH FACTS

IN 1939, New York City bettered all its previous records, with but one exception. The general death rate for 1938 was 9.8 per 1000 population, and in 1939 it was 10 per 1000. Infant mortality decreased in the Brownsville Health District from approximately 37 deaths for 1000 live births in 1938, to the record low of 31 infants per 1000, under one year, during 1939. However, the rate would have been even better had not the infant mortality among the colored population been so high in this district — 56 per 1000 live births as compared with the general mortality rate of 31. It was also found that the colored population of the Brownsville area was suffering disproportionately from tuberculosis. For these distressing conditions, we may give thanks in substantial measure to the Brownsville slums in which the negroes are compelled to live.

The record for venereal diseases, such as syphilis and gonorrhea, in this district, has given the health officials serious concern. During 1939, 514 new cases of syphilis, and 163 new cases of gonorrhea were reported. It is held by the city health authorities that these figures indicated probably 2,500 to 2,600 cases of syphilis in the District, including the cases which are unreported. This is an exceedingly high number of social diseases for the total population.

Venereal diseases are generally known to be more prevalent in the slum areas. An analysis of all cases of venereal diseases for New York City and its Health Center Districts, for 1930, made by G. J. Drolet and Louis Weiner, tends to establish this as a fact. In the borough

of Manhattan, Central Harlem, the Lower West Side, East Harlem, and the Lower East Side — all slum areas — led in the order given in the proportion of venereal diseases. In the borough of Brooklyn, the Red Hook and Fort Greene Districts, also slum areas, led in social diseases. The common toilets and the general filth, deserted, boarded up buildings, dark hallways, overcrowded rooms, are factors which make for social diseases. The depressing surroundings and propinquity of the sexes result in a moral laissez faire, helplessness, ignorance, and promiscuity which lead to disaster.

## CRIME FACTS

It is by this time pretty well recognized that slums, and crime and misdemeanors, bear a close relationship to one another. Bad housing areas and crime areas have been found to coincide. In 1934, the Committee on Crime and Delinquency, locating the addresses of offenders and places where crimes had been committed, reported conditions to the New York City Housing Authority with special reference to thirteen areas selected by the Slum Clearance Committee as bearing slum characteristics. The figures for 1930 were selected for this report because of their relation to the United States Census information of that year. Five slum areas were chosen in Brooklyn, among them a part of Brownsville which lies almost entirely in the above described Brownsville housing zone. The fact that the Committee on Crime and Delinquency bestowed upon Brownsville the dubious honor of choosing it as one of five slum dis-

tricts in Brooklyn is in itself significant. In spot maps which were made for Brooklyn showing (1) Distribution of Arrests by Residence of Offender (2) Crime-addresses of Offenders (3) Juvenile Delinquency-addresses of Offenders, the general Brownsville area of Brooklyn is much too well spotted. For the sake of comparison, I give herewith the five slum areas selected, with their population and size in square blocks.

## LOCATION OF SUBSTANDARD AREAS

	Total Population	Square Blocks
9) East River to Johnson Street and Myrtle Avenue — Adelphi Street to Bridge Street and Adams Street . . . . .	23,109	86
10) Newtown Creek to Driggs Avenue and North 14th Street — Humboldt Street to East River . . . . .	44,274	146
11) Richardson and Ten Eyck Street to Broadway and Flushing Avenue—Bushwick Avenue to Union and Manhattan Avenue . . . . .	42,517	98
12) East New York Avenue to Sutter Avenue — Van Sinderen Avenue to Hopkinson Avenue . . . . .	17,330	44
13) Hamilton Avenue, Coles Street, Court Street and Bush Street — to New York Bay . . . . .	20,564	120
TOTAL BROOKLYN SLUM AREAS . . . . .	147,794	494

The Committee on Crime and Delinquency made an analysis of crime and juvenile delinquency under the eight headings listed below. Now let us examine the figures obtained for each of these, both as to the total number of arrests made in each district, and as to the total number of all arrests for all crimes and delinquencies made in every district.

	9 (23,109)	10 (44,274)	11 (42,517)	12 (17,330)	13 (20,564)
Offense . . . . .					
I—Offenses against the person . . . . .	66	70	75	51	38
II—Offenses against chastity . . . . .	147	36	67	28	20
III—Offenses against the family . . . . .	2	6	3	2	7
IV—Offenses against property . . . . .	78	67	101	65	36
V—Offenses against public peace and order . . . . .	407	491	795	519	340
Felonies—unclassified . . . . .	0	0	0	0	0
Misdemeanors—unclassified . . . . .	4	1	1	5	0
Juvenile delinquents . . . . .	16	50	57	40	14
GRAND TOTAL . . . . .	720	721	1,099	710	455

We note that Area 12, in Brownsville, has a total of only 10 offenses less than Area 9, which had 5,779 more people; only 11 less than Area 10, with more than three times as many people; 389 less than Area 11, also with nearly two and a half times as many people, and 255 more than Area 13, which had 3,234 more people. We begin to see that in 1930 the Brownsville area was perhaps the worst crime area in Brooklyn. This impression becomes confirmed as we study crime classifications of these five slum areas by the percentage of crimes in each area to its population.

	9 (23,109)	10 (44,274)	11 (42,517)	12 (17,330)	13 (20,564)
Offense . . . . .					
I—Offenses against the person . . . . .	.28%	.15%	.17%	.29%	.18%
II—Offenses against chastity . . . . .	.63%	.08%	.15%	.16%	.09%
III—Offenses against the family . . . . .	.08%	.01%	.007%	.01%	.03%
IV—Offenses against property . . . . .	.33%	.15%	.23%	.37%	.17%
V—Offenses against public peace and order . . . . .	1.76%	1.10%	1.86%	2.99%	1.63%
Juvenile delinquents . . . . .	.06%	.11%	.13%	.23%	.06%
TOTAL CRIMES TO POPULATION . . . . .	3.11%	1.62%	2.82%	4.09%	2.21%



From the above figures, we note that, of the five selected slum districts, the Brownsville slum district had the greatest percentage of arrests for crimes per hundred residents in almost every classification. It was first in offenses against the person, against chastity, against property, against public peace and order, and in the number of juvenile delinquents. It was only second in offenses against the family, but by a small margin. As to total number of crimes, it was first by a "handsome" margin.

This, then, was the crime and juvenile delinquency situation in Brownsville in 1930, in the area between East New York and Sutter Avenues, and Van Sinderen and Hopkinson Avenues. But we have ample reason to believe that it was as bad in other parts of old Brownsville. Was there any reason why crime should have stopped at Hopkinson Avenue, or should not have crossed Sutter Avenue to Blake Avenue and other neighboring streets? Certainly what is now the housing zone was even in 1930 an area of substandard homes in every way fitted for the breeding, rearing, and dwelling of anti-social elements.

Some may say that was all in 1930, and that 1930 figures cannot apply today, ten years later. They have been ten years of economic distress — a condition conducive to all kinds of misdeeds. Except for several playgrounds, which affect only juniors, there have been no changes in Brownsville which would tend to diminish crimes or delinquencies. Many of the older criminals have disappeared in one way or another, but the daily newspapers attest to the fact that these have been followed by worthy successors. If it is accepted that bad housing has

an upward effect on crime and delinquency rates — and it generally is now — then Brownsville housing, today much worse than it was in 1930, for reasons given above, should be a much more effective environment for crime in 1940 than it was in 1930. Furthermore, there has been a very significant shift in population. Many of the sober, hard working, thrifty elements, who originally came to Brownsville for fresh air and more living room, have disappeared from the area. The helpless people of mixed classes and races who now reside here, have been compelled to remain by economic and social forces beyond their control. This condition of the population makes for all kinds of problems which affect the mental, physical, and moral health of the New York community.

#### PUBLIC HOUSING PROVIDED FOR ALL CRIME AREAS BUT BROWNSVILLE

IN making the above study, I have noted another very interesting fact. In or near Slum Area 9, given above, the state-financed Navy Yard Housing Project will soon rise. In the neighborhood of Area 11, the Williamsburg Housing Project was built several years ago. In the neighborhood of Area 13, Red Hook Houses were recently completed. There was a Queens district, not discussed by us above, called Area 14, and here the Queensbridge Housing Project has been built. That leaves Area 10, in Greenpoint, and Area 12, which is in Brownsville, still without a housing project. Now some of the good citizens of Greenpoint are against a housing project; in fact, they told the City Planning Commission at the

public hearing on the housing zones that they did not want a housing zone, or public housing, in Greenpoint. But Brownsville, the only other of the five Brooklyn slum areas listed above not to have been provided with a public housing project, must have public housing. For the welfare of Brownsville and of Greater New York as a whole, this area must have a public housing project soon. Williamsburg, the Navy Yard, and Red Hook, are not to be envied because they already have public housing facilities. However, in all fairness to the citizens of Brownsville, they too must be given immediate consideration in view of their urgent housing needs.

It is interesting to note that Commissioner Robert Moses, in a study on public housing made in 1938, chose two areas for public housing development in Brooklyn — the Navy Yard and Brownsville. Commissioner Moses is not a resident of Brownsville, and never was; he picked Brownsville, as he did the Navy Yard, on the basis of its substandard housing. And, incidentally, the Brownsville area which he chose, from Douglass Street to Rockaway Avenue, and from Riverdale Avenue to Blake Avenue, is indisputably a much better-housed area than the housing zone recently chosen.

### CONCLUSION

THESE, then, are the conditions of housing, health, crime, and delinquency, which make it necessary that the New York City Housing Authority turn to Brownsville for its next project. Such an undertaking will not only benefit the area under consideration; it will pay a

good dividend to the entire metropolis, by improving the social and physical health of our citizenry. Furthermore, it will offer a good return to the city financially.

With respect to the former — good citizenship — let us examine the component elements of the population of Brownsville. A large percentage — a steadily diminishing one — is foreign born. All the nations of Europe, and many another nation, are represented here. There is a negro community numbering probably 10,000 souls, and perhaps well over that figure. The people in Brownsville are active, intelligent, and energetic, and have grown bitter and uneasy because of their economic instability. The population, in overwhelming measure in the low-income brackets, suffers actual want of many necessities of life. The people who live in the slums, with all the concomitants of disease, mortality, crime, delinquency, and physical and mental depression, are restless.

I have said that a housing project would pay a good dividend to the entire metropolis by improving the social and physical health of our citizenry. I have tried to show that slums make for bad citizenry. Adequate American homes, on the other hand, help to make good citizens. Given American homes, with light, air, sunshine and facilities for modern living, space for play and recreation, and we shall have more people with healthy bodies, healthy minds, and healthy souls.

It is significant that in the three years that Williamsburg Houses are in existence, only one minor delinquency has been reported among 1,622 families. The former occupants of substandard homes in Brownsville, or other parts of the city, who are eligible for admission,

will find a new life awaiting them in such a housing project in Brownsville. They will come to cheery, comfortable, healthful homes which will have a tonic effect upon their bodies, their minds, their souls. They will participate in new community activities, and will enjoy many hitherto unheard of advantages. There will be provided pre-school classes, public playgrounds, clubs, domestic science classes, and sport activities. Their thoughts will cease to stew in the poison of discontent, and they will no longer feel that they are "the forgotten."

Such a housing project in Brownsville would also serve as an Americanizing force for the surrounding communities. For it is to be remembered that the general facilities of public housing projects have been put by the New York City Housing Authority at the service of residents in their vicinities. The United States Housing Authority has found that community activities of tenants in public housing projects are proving of great benefit in upbuilding civic morale, and in bettering general living conditions, throughout the various neighborhoods. Social, cultural, and recreational facilities provided in the projects are being used in perfect harmony by the tenants and their neighbors. The playgrounds, municipal health centers, domestic science classes, musical organizations, cultural clubs, forums, and classes, which would no doubt be found in a public housing project in Brownsville, would bring physical, social, and intellectual improvement to a larger part of Brownsville.

A housing project in Brownsville would enrich New York in a material way. It would save costs resulting from crime, disease, fires, and other evils of the slums. It would improve the fallen values of real estate

in this part of Brooklyn — so fallen that it is almost impossible to get fresh mortgage money here. The projects at Red Hook and Williamsburg, and in lower Manhattan, have already begun to have such a tonic effect upon neighboring real estate. It would also "pep up" business in the community, whose merchants have told a tale of woe these past ten years and more. This is not only the woe resulting from the depression; it is also the loss of business which derives from the fact that those inhabitants of Brownsville who can possibly do so, foresake this region as soon as they can, to find better homes and better environment for their children and for themselves. And, generally, those who now come to live in Brownsville, come to live in old frame shacks and small mean tenement houses because they must have cheap rents "at any cost."

A public housing project would bring new blood to Brownsville — people, it is true, who could only afford to pay small rents, but who would pay those rents. And they would face the future with a new courage resulting from the stimulating new environment and new opportunities for happiness.

A public housing project would be but a beginning. Private owners would be given an incentive to improve their properties, as has been the case in the vicinity of other housing projects. Various plans for the improvement of property are now being discussed. There is a block scheme, under which all owners in a block would pool their holdings to rehabilitate the block, and to take advantage of the now practically wasted yard space. Again, the banks and insurance companies have just obtained legislation permitting them to enter into the

moderately low-rent housing field. The forward-looking bankers at the head of great financial institutions in the community are interested in bringing their banks into this new field of community improvement. If they will erect such improved housing facilities in chosen sections of Brownsville, as we have defined it above, it will, together with a public housing project, give a sharp upward impetus to better housing all over Brownsville.

After all, Brownsville is not located in a physically unattractive part of our city; it simply was doomed from the start by the very nature of its history. Within a few blocks of its northeastern boundaries begin the Grand Central Parkway and then Highland Park — a beautiful region. On its western border we have the East Flatbush and Eastern Parkway sections — both good residential sections. On the east lies East New York, which, while it continues the slum area where Brownsville leaves off, further on becomes a fair residential section. On the south we have a vast region of seaside land practically vacant. A beautiful region could be made out of this filthy, black, useless back yard of Brownsville and Brooklyn. Brownsville, together with its neighbor, East New York, could be made to border upon a coastal park which would half-girdle Brooklyn with a health-giving and soul-lifting green ring of beauty.

This, then, is the housing problem in Brownsville. Brownsville, with a past, also has a future. The New York City Housing Authority can immediately launch Brownsville upon that future by erecting a public housing project in this blighted area of the Borough of Brooklyn. Brownsville must have public housing.

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